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IS THERE A HELL ?



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*A Symposium by
Leaders of Religious Thought*



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INTRODUCTION

WHETHER or not we confess it to our fellow-creatures, we all cling desperately to the belief that there is another life beyond the confines of this one. Atheists tell us glibly enough that we die like dogs; that our souls perish with our bodies; that when the earth has swallowed us up, we become part and parcel of the clay from which we were originally made, and there is an end of the whole matter. But in our heart of hearts we do not believe the Atheists, and we do not even believe that the Atheists believe themselves.

Belief in immortality does not necessarily involve a belief in eternal punishment, but it presupposes the re-existence of good and bad people alike—of unrepentant criminals as well as of devout Christians—and unless we either

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regard death as a purifying process which makes us all equally good, or convince ourselves that beyond the grave we lose our individualities and our instincts as well as our bodies, we must believe in a hell.

Of recent years there has been more talk in the pulpit of heaven than of hell, and not a few people have endeavoured to persuade themselves that there is no hell.

This is a very natural reaction from the terrifying notions of a material hell which were inflicted for many generations upon our forefathers. Our modern preachers realise that to endeavour to make people good by means of instilling the fear of God in their minds is less satisfactory than to endeavour to make them good by means of implanting the Love of God into their hearts. So they have taken to dwelling less upon His wrath than upon His mercy.

But the existence of hell can neither be ignored nor denied. If the good are rewarded for their goodness in the world beyond, then it stands to reason that the wicked are punished

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for their wickedness; for if that punishment consisted of nothing else than of being shut out from the happiness of the good, it would still constitute hell.

Hell may not be a place; it may be a state. Heaven may not be a place; it may be a state. But if heaven is the reward of the righteous, there must be a negative of non-reward, if not an antithesis of direct punishment, and the negative or antithesis of heaven *must* be hell.

The Dantesque picture of this hell as a penal place of flames, and smoke, and physical torture, appalled the people of yesterday and sent children to bed in agonies of terror. But that was an absurd picture. One can burn one's hand in a furnace, but one cannot burn one's soul there. Only a spiritual fire can be felt by a spirit.

As humanity has become more and more enlightened, therefore, it has grown to recognise that to represent "hell fires" by means of such pictures as Doré's is nothing more than a riot of imaginative genius. It knows that a

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photograph of a smelting works would be quite as accurate and quite as hopelessly uncertain. For no man can adumbrate hell. It is one of the mysteries knowable only to the Great Beyond.

Mankind has abandoned the conception of hell as a real pit, full of fire and brimstone, in the same way that it has abandoned the ancient and ignorant notion that a thunder-clap is the direct voice of God, or that an earthquake is specially provided to swallow the wicked. But in throwing over the credulity of ignorance it has betrayed a tendency to become incredulous so far as the fruits of sin are concerned; to assure itself that because there may be no "hell fire" there is no hell of any kind in the life eternal.

This is folly almost worse confounded than the belief in a material place of material torment for the wicked. There is a hell; that is incontrovertible, because there is good and bad. Its actual character remains a mystery, but its existence is clear.

In the succeeding pages of this book a

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number of well-known religious authorities give their own views upon the subject—views which in many particulars are dissimilar from one another. But it will be found that every one of these authorities gives an unqualified “Yes” to the vital question— “Is there a Hell?”

I

THE HISTORY OF HELL

BY DR. R. F. HORTON, M.A.

It should always be remembered that the belief in hell rests precisely on the same ground as the belief in heaven. In each case belief comes partly from the instinct of justice, which demands a future settlement of the inequalities and uncertainties of human life; partly from natural religion; and chiefly from positive religion, and, in our own case, from the definite Christian revelation.

Wherever the belief in heaven is held, the belief in hell comes also as its counterpart. Thus even in the oldest and most brilliant of all European thinkers, Plato, the visions of the future world are definite representations of a judgment which consigns the just to Elysium and the unjust to Tartarus. The whole doctrine springs out of our moral nature and assumes

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forms according to the intellectual or imaginative strength of the poet, the philosopher, or the theologian.

In the positive religions the instinct becomes a dogma, and the future judgment is represented in forms so definite that they lay themselves open to criticism and objection. The Christian doctrine, especially when it is formulated by the dogmatic Church of the West, and presented on its juridical and not on its poetical side, has always excited criticism and challenged unbelief. But the thing which should always be borne in mind, when eschatology is discussed, is that there cannot be any evidence for heaven which does not become at the same time evidence for hell.

In the New Testament, for example, as every reader is aware, the doctrine of the future rests on the positive words of Christ and of His apostles. The future world emerges out of its shadowy uncertainty by the force and light of the revelation in Jesus Christ—that is, a revelation of righteousness, and at the same time a revelation of judgment. If Christ is the Saviour

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of the world, He also is the Judge of the world; and if in describing the future judgment He speaks of some as going into eternal life, He at the same time speaks of others as going into eternal punishment.

The instinct which leads to this anticipation of the future, and finds expression, or confirmation, in the doctrines of religion, may be questioned as a whole, but cannot be divided. Challenged on the one point, it answers on the other with equal distinctness.

If we were dealing merely with an authoritative dogma, we might criticise and discriminate, but we are dealing, at the bottom, with an instinctive judgment which moves together, if it moves at all. If therefore we are to be logical we must, when we give up hell, give up heaven also.

It is the feeblest form of sentimentality to profess a belief in heaven—and especially to accept heaven for ourselves—when we have no fear of hell and have given up believing in it. And to do the modern mind justice it does, as a rule, frankly surrender both. The disbelief

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of to-day in hell is equally a disbelief in heaven. The vast bulk of the indifferent have no expectations of any future life, and if they genially declare that God is too kind to send them to hell, they practically believe that He is not kind enough, or, at any rate, has not the power, to send them to heaven. They have dismissed the whole idea of a future life for themselves and for their friends, and they live practically in the present and for things that can be gained and enjoyed here in this life.

But those who abide by the Christian revelation, and those who think deeply and seriously about the problems of the soul, are led to clearer convictions about the future world, and as their convictions clear, they reveal those contrasted states which Plato describes; which are found in the Egyptian Book of the Dead; and which are the assumption for the explicit statement of hell in the Scriptures.

I should take my ground, therefore, on this instinctive theology. I believe in heaven and I believe in hell. The change which has come over our thought in modern times does not affect

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the existence, but only the nature, of heaven and hell. Ideas become clearer and moral conceptions more discriminating as time goes on, and the crude representations of the future world which sufficed for primitive times seem to us childish and unmeaning.

We are obliged to revise the geography, if we may so call it, of the spiritual world. We do not say that heaven is above and hell is beneath, for such expressions have lost their meaning for us with the fuller knowledge of the solar system. What do we say? We say, in the light of Christian revelation, that heaven is a state of permanent reconciliation with God, and that hell is a state of permanent enmity to God. To be reconciled with God is to be in heaven, even here, and to be at enmity with God is similarly to be in hell.

We surmise with confidence from our present experience that when the soul begins its pilgrimage released from the body, it is still precisely what it has been. The life of the future world is only the life of this world without the body and the material scenery of which

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the body is a part. Entering into that uncorporeal world, we shall be what we are—reconciled with God or at enmity with Him. And the scenery and surroundings of that world will be there, as here, determined by our spiritual state. We shall find ourselves in Abraham's bosom, or lift up our eyes being in torment, precisely according to the principles which make us here at peace with God or restless and antagonistic to the divine will.

As we thus interpret the older language according to the psychology and the ethics of our modern times, we see how wholly misguided is that mode of thinking which would say: "I believe in heaven, but I do not believe in hell." We see that what we ought rather to say is, either that we do not believe in heaven *or* hell, or that we believe in both with that deeper and more intelligent apprehension of the meaning of the terms which is the fruit of our spiritual and moral progress.

II

WHAT IS HELL LIKE?

BY SILAS K. HOCKING

IN the Wesleyan Catechism, which I learned as a lad, one of the questions was, "What sort of a place is hell?" The answer was, "Hell is a dark and bottomless pit of fire and brimstone."

The next question was, "How will the wicked be punished there?" The answer was, "The wicked will be punished in hell by having their bodies tormented by fire and their souls by a sense of the wrath of God."

This question was followed by another: "How long will these torments last?" And the answer was, "The torments of hell will last for ever and ever."

This Catechism was published by the Wesleyan Book Room of those days, and on the title page it was stated that it was intended "for children of tender years."

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Many years ago, however, I understand, the Wesleyans eliminated these questions and answers from their Catechism. Still, up to perhaps five-and-twenty years ago the idea of a material hell of fire was very generally taught in the churches.

Then began the revolt, which was very largely assisted by George Macdonald in his novels, and later on by Samuel Cox in his book "Salvator Mundi," and by Farrar in his "Eternal Hope," in which he showed that the pulpit teaching about hell was an unauthorised accretion to the true doctrine, and was unsupported by Scripture as well as being repugnant to reason.

But, apart from these books—for, after all, they only expressed the thought that had been growing in the minds of intelligent Christian people for years previously—the hell of fire and brimstone was doomed, and since that time the doctrine of a material hell has gradually disappeared from the sermons of most preachers.

To-day I question if there is any minister

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of repute—any thinker—who holds that doctrine. It was felt that the whole conception, which we owe very largely, I think, to Dante and Milton, was inconsistent with the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

To bring people into a world full of temptation and to punish them for ever and ever for sins which they could scarcely help committing, and sometimes did not even know were sins, was felt to be out of harmony with the character of the Being who was represented as all-merciful and all-wise.

Indeed, it is to be doubted whether men ever believed fully in the existence of such a hell, for if preachers believed in the hell they taught thirty years ago, and had any humanity in them, they would have been unable to sleep in their beds. To talk of a hell so horrible that no man with a heart in him would throw a dog into it, and yet to preach that the Almighty Father cast the bulk of the human family into it to burn for ever and ever, was to insult the very name of the Being whom we are taught to love.

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Of course, it is possible to bring together a number of passages of Scripture which seem to bear out the idea, but those passages are capable of a very different interpretation. Moreover, it is always unsafe to build up important dogmas on isolated texts. By any mere textual criticism the Bible may be made to teach anything. The hell of the Scriptures has to be interpreted by the revealed character of God, and anything inconsistent with that character must be assumed to be wrong. God must be consistent with Himself, and the hell such as our fathers feared makes God out to be worse than any heathen deity ever conceived.

The truth is, hell is a state, and not a place. We make our own hell or heaven, and we carry it with us. There are plenty of people in hell to-day—a hell of their own making. The world has been built on moral foundations; to live in harmony with what we understand to be God's law is the truest heaven; to live out of harmony with that law is hell.

Character decides the question both here and hereafter. Heaven is hell to the hellish mind.

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Heaven is not constructed out of external things. White robes and palms, and golden streets and crowns and harps, would not in themselves make heaven. Heaven is the result of heavenly mindedness, pure hearts, lovable dispositions.

Hell is merely the natural result of character of evil habits and evil doing, and of an ungenerous temper and disposition. We can hardly conceive that conditions will vary very much in any future state of being from what they are here. The pure in heart see God; the people of gentle and generous disposition, of clean lives and habits, of noble aspirations, honest purpose and intent, will have their heaven in themselves. The evil man will find just what he fits himself for. Heaven and hell may be the same place; and heaven will be hell to the man who loves evil things.

It all resolves itself into a question of character. Each man goes to his own place. To talk of fire and brimstone in the spiritual realm is to talk of an absurdity. To talk of endless torment which can result in no good, is simply to assume that God punishes the man for the

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sake of the punishment, and makes sin eternal for the same purpose.

My own hope and belief is that in the processes of the ages all men will grow to see the good; that all lost souls will be reclaimed; that good will triumph over evil, purity over vice; that the antagonism of the present will be brought to an end; that out of the present chaos an eternal harmony will be evolved, and that God will be all in all.

III

HELL AND THE EARLY FATHERS

BY THE VEN. ARCHDEACON
W. MACDONALD SINCLAIR, D.D.

THE idea generally connected by Jewish teachers in our Lord's time with the word "Gehenna" (hell) was that of "an irreversible doom for the wholly wicked"; and in His teaching and that of His Apostles the word was used in its popular and prevalent sense.

So in the records of His discourses we find "eternal fire," "unquenchable fire," "the place where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched," the prison from which there is no coming out until the last farthing is paid, eternal punishment contrasted with eternal life, exclusion from the kingdom, banishment from Christ, "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth," "the outer darkness."

Some of the Apostles write of "the mist of

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darkness for ever," "the blackness of darkness for ever," "the fierceness of fire," "perdition," "great tribulation," "burning with fire," "being without," "the second death," being "cast into the lake of fire," "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," "the wrath to come," "wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish," "death," "punishment," "destruction," "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord."

Many of the greatest theologians have taught that these terms are allegorical, metaphorical, and poetical, like so many other phrases in the New Testament, and that they imply the spiritual state which is the contrary of salvation. Many have held that Almighty Love will, in the end, prevail, and that St. Paul meant this when he spoke of "the final restitution of all things," and of God in the end being "all in all."

The mediæval mind greatly enjoyed reducing these poetical phrases to matter of fact, describing the place of hell, attributing the castigation of the impenitent to a vast host of malignant devils gloating over imaginary

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refinements of torture and the like. All such delineations are purely fantastical, and deserve no attention.

The great Alexandrian school of theology, the rival of St. Augustine and the Western, held wide views on this subject. Origen taught that the fire must have a purifying quality, and ordinary sinners must remain in it till purged. It was not a material fire, but self-kindled, like an internal fever; "a figurative representation of the moral process by which restoration shall be effected." Clement of Alexandria spoke of the fire as a sort of spiritual fire, which purifies the soul. His writings imply a punishment which would necessarily cease when its remedial object was attained. Origen maintains that the final reconciliation will be universal.

Gregory of Nyssa, one of the most prominent and powerful Fathers in the Council of Constantinople, was influenced by these views. He taught that the soul, having an affinity to God, must ultimately return to God, and that the anguish it must suffer is necessarily caused

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during the separation of good from evil, not from any desire on God's part to torment. Hence all evil will ultimately disappear.

Traces of the same opinion appear in Diodorus of Tarsus, Didymus the blind, of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzen, and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

These merciful opinions have always been more or less present in the Greek Church.

Neither the Creeds nor the Articles have any doctrine on the subject of hell beyond the undefined phrase of the *Quicumque vult*: "they that have done evil into everlasting fire."

The views of the Alexandrian School and the other Eastern Fathers referred to do not seem incompatible with the figurative language of our Lord and His apostles.

The subject is so mysterious that I am not inclined to give any personal opinion upon it. It appears to me that we are taught with authority that for those who have rejected the love of God there will be punishment; that it is not forbidden to hope that this punishment may be remediable; that we know nothing about

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the place or details of the spiritual Gehenna, which was a name taken from an evil gorge, the Valley of Hinnom, outside Jerusalem, where offal, rubbish, and dead bodies were continually burning; and that some of the greatest Christian teachers have taken the widest views of the subject. It appears to me that no Christian teaching would be complete without the strongest warnings that rejection of the love of God will be followed in the future life by spiritual retribution.

IV

THE CERTAINTY OF HELL

BY THE REV. F. B. MEYER, B.A.

IN his formative book, "Salvator Mundi," which I read years ago with great profit, and from the pages of which I have no hesitation in quoting, Samuel Cox tells us that the word "hell" comes from an old English or Teutonic word, *hel-an*, and means any covered place. It was used to denote the dark hole into which a tailor flung his waste shreds, and even the retired spot to which, in a popular game, a lad led a lass to exact the forfeit of a kiss. But these associations have long since been dissipated from the word, which now denotes exclusively the place of future punishment, to which at death the wicked are consigned.

Most often in Scripture hell stands for the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Ge-Hinnom, or Valley of Hinnom. This was a

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steep ravine immediately under the south-west wall of Jerusalem, and was watered by the Kidron. In the early days of the kings the wealthier classes had their villas and summer residences on this spot. At the south-east extremity lay the royal summer garden with its Tophet, or music-grove, where men and women played on musical instruments of divers descriptions. As the nation became more luxurious and less religious, idolatrous shrines rose in this locality, and idol deities were worshipped with licentious and cruel rites. The horrid fires of Molech were kindled in the beautiful valley, and children were burned alive. When Josiah came to the throne, and led a much needed revolution, the full vehemence of his reforming passion was directed towards this defiling sacrilege. The groves were burned down, the pleasure gardens laid waste, and the images ground to powder. The valley was rendered unclean for ever, and the bones of the dead strewn over its surface. From that time it became the common cesspool and scrap-heap of the city, where offal was cast and the bodies of

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animals and criminals were allowed to rot. As there was no river to carry off the drainage of the city, recourse was had to the fires, which were left burning day and night to destroy the waste materials, which otherwise would have bred typhoid. The fire and worms fed on the refuse and rubbish of the mountain city.

Gehenna, therefore, in common speech, stood for the wastage of Jerusalem, and to Hebrew prophets became the type of the doom of the wicked. When Jesus Christ said that whoever spoke angry and malicious words was in danger of the fires of Gehenna; when He said that it would prove profitable if a man were to sacrifice one of his members rather than risk the fate of being cast into Gehenna; when He threatened the Scribes and Pharisees with the judgment of Gehenna, He predicted the peril of being cast among the waste products of the universe, and of suffering so intense that only the keen edge of fire could portray it.

It is impossible, therefore, to accept the teaching of Jesus Christ as the authoritative and final word of God without believing that

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there is certainly a hell as there is heaven. Nothing else can be entertained and believed by those to whom His word is final. Remember that He said, "These shall go their way into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Connected in Hebrew thought with this word was the thought of Retribution. Besides condemning the body of the criminal to execution, the Sanhedrin could ordain that it should be cast into the Valley of Hinnom as a mark of special ignominy and shame. We hold it a bitter disgrace to be denied Christian burial, but for a Jew to be denied burial in the family sepulchre was the extreme of retribution. When, therefore, our Lord said that the wicked were to go into the eternal fires, He meant that there was an inevitable retribution awaiting those who were impenitent and determined in wrongdoing.

It is a misconception of His words to import the idea of literal flames. Fire cannot burn the physical body or vehicle with which the soul will array itself when it goes forth from this

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mortal to immortality, and from this corruptible to incorruption. Flesh and blood cannot enter the realm of the Hereafter. Fire cannot feed upon the cosmic integument of the world of spirits; but what fire does for the body will be supplied by remorse, by the torturing consciousness of an absolutely wasted opportunity, by the perpetual facing of the ruined lives which have been irreparably blasted and corrupted during the earthly sojourn.

In this world sin spells, sooner or later, suffering. As men sow to the flesh, of the flesh they reap pain and anguish—the brand of Cain; and when we pass hence, we have no reason to suppose that any other law will obtain. But it may be answered that whilst this may apply to notorious evildoers, it cannot be true in the case of those who have not gone to any excess of riot. Here is a man who has just lived to enjoy himself, to make money, to rise in the social scale, to have a good time—is there retribution awaiting him? Yet, think of such a man, living only to pamper and indulge himself; dowered with the wealth of immortality

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but contemning it, and with the faculty for the infinite, but allowing it to atrophy by disuse! Let him pass into the eternal world, will he not be at once exposed to the keenest torture as the light of eternal purity and love breaks on his maimed, debased, dwarfed, atrophied, and selfish nature? Will he find a congenial atmosphere in an atmosphere of perfect love, or congenial associates in those holy spirits who have become perfected? As the diseased eye suffers a torture when exposed without a shade to the glare of a furnace or of the meridian sun, so that soul will suffer to the point of asking hills to fall on it and rocks to cover it!

It is impossible to believe that those who have accustomed themselves to find their loftiest aims and desires satisfied by the things of the flesh can transform themselves, or be transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to the tone and temper of that world when they come face to face with reality! Our bodies, said the old philosopher, will go to earth, our blood to water, our breath to air, but the mind, the thought, the soul that informed them, what

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will become of these? Where will they find their parent element, their home? If we have made them the mere captives and hungry dependents of sense, how can they do other than find that world all strange, and alien, and full of torment? This is the inevitable retribution that must follow on a life of selfish gratification, as well as on one of flagrant and filthy sin.

As to the fate of the evil liver. When such a one becomes divested of the body, that was the instrument of his sin, he is torn by the appetites and cravings of the past without the means of giving them the slightest satisfaction. As the rich man in the parable confessed, "there is no drop of water to allay the tormenting thirst." All the conditions of his life are strange, unwelcome, and repugnant. There has been nothing in the past to fit him for them, and much to unfit. Can he fail to be devoured by a sense of loss and misery, by shame, by a horrible sense of discord? All this argues the absolute necessity, even apart from Scripture, for believing in a hell. Therefore, such a belief has characterised the religion of mankind.

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As to the other questions that loom through the mist, as to the object, result, and duration of such sufferings, we are not asked to pronounce an opinion here. It is enough to say that for every reason we must believe in the inevitable loss, suffering, and wastage which are denoted by the word Hell.

V

THE JUSTICE OF HELL

BY THE REV. A. J. WALDRON

THE best criticism of popular or antiquated theology is born of the enlightened human consciousness, and not primarily of Greek exegesis. We are getting back to Martineau and to the Quaker method of interpretation, viz. "The seat of authority is within."

If the Bible teaches "everlasting punishment," so much the worse for the Bible, because we cannot believe it; you may quote texts and have behind the texts the very finest scholarship to justify certain interpretations, but it is no good. We are no longer the slaves of a book, nor the blind devotees of a creed; we believe in love and in evolution.

The "Origin of Species" knocked the bottom out of many creeds, and particularly it made the belief in the orthodox hell absolutely impossible.

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The future state is on parallel lines with this, it is not a heaven of final bliss, nor a hell of punishment, it is grade upon grade, and we shall each go out as we are and go on in the line of evolution as we have started here, or go down to something as we have misused our faculties and opportunities on this earthly plane.

Theologically, there are several theories :

1. The doctrine of everlasting punishment.
2. The theory of conditional immortality.
3. Eternal hope.
4. Eternal punishment.

Each position can be supported by the weight and authority of great names.

The first is absolutely impossible, for God to punish a man for ever, without a chance of the punishment serving the purpose of reform, is diabolical; no person with a spark of human emotion could assent to such a creed.

All the best of us shriek against the creed; we say with Browning in "Paracelsus," "God ! Thou art love ! and I build my faith on that."

Secondly, the doctrine of "Conditional Im-

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mortality." Sometimes many of us are favourably disposed towards this solution, for it seems that some go out into the Great Beyond, having spent their all in "riotous living." We ask what is there left of soul, of love, of purity, of humanity. When I almost lose my faith in man and despair of certain souls, I assent to this doctrine of "conditional immortality."

Eternal hope? Yes, most of us assent to Tennyson's words: "God will be the final goal of every ill."

If punishment is to win the verdict of our best consciousness, it must be remedial.

Love can only be proved by self-sacrifice; this is the key of the universe, and if so, then it must have opportunities in the next world as well as in this, and I could ask no greater favour of God than to be allowed to help those in the spiritual sphere whom I had injured on this plane.

I would interpret God by the highest I know here, and I know of nothing which is more calculated to do this than the Madonna and the Child. Motherhood represents the heart of God,

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and motherhood is the emblazoned symbol of pity, love, self-sacrifice.

Of course I know that some people believe the gospel of fear is necessary to restrain mankind from sin, but such people are but very poor students of the history of the race. The greatest dynamic in the world for individual and social salvation is love.

Eternal punishment! This is the more scholarly interpretation, and simply means God's punishment: "Shall not the judge of the whole earth do right?"

Of course there is a hell. I could not believe in God unless I believe in justice, and outraged conscience demands that the sinner should be punished. How I know not, but believe the verdict and sentence will be just, and that in the end we shall "rise on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things."

VI

THE ABSURDITY OF A MATERIAL HELL

BY THE REV. DR. CHARLES BROWN

It is absurd to say that anybody preaches to-day a material hell, or to suggest such a thing even for a moment. Indeed, I might go farther, and say that few terrifying sermons are preached nowadays.

I rather think, personally, that it would be a little better for modern preaching if something more of fear were incorporated into it. Better by far to make people afraid of evil-doing than to keep silent concerning the awful nature and penalty of sin. Unless there is retribution for wrong-living and wrong-doing, both here and hereafter, there must surely be some flaw in the moral government of the world, and to lead people to suppose that they will not suffer for

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their sins is surely the most dangerous doctrine one could encourage.

I do not think anybody preaches alarming sermons. I rather wish they sometimes did. It seems to me that the modern sermon is often a great deal too smooth and soft. We are too much disposed to think that it makes no difference whether people sin or not—that's the defect in most modern preaching.

For my own part, I certainly believe in a hell hereafter as well as in a hell here. But I doubt very much whether any intelligent man or woman believes in a materialistic hell—that is in a real raging fire in which people are eternally burned. How can an immortal soul be burned after the fashion in which Christian martyrs of other days were burned in the body?

The hell of the New Testament is described under a figure. It is the figure of the Valley of Gehenna, where they burned the offal that went out of Jerusalem. But, mark you, if a figure of that sort is used to represent punishment for sin there must be something very terrible behind it, there must be some dread

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reality underlying so dread a symbol. Christ would not have used such a figure if there were nothing to be feared in the after life by those whose lives on earth are unfaithful and evil.

For my own part, I assuredly believe that wrong-doing will have its reward in the world to come; that, as St. Paul says: "Every man will receive according to the things which he has done in his body, whether they be good or bad."

The teaching of Christ, in His parables and elsewhere, supports this belief. He teaches the inevitable and bitter consequences of unfaithfulness and presumption—of presumption with regard to duty, and presuming on the goodness of God, of the unfaithfulness of a slack and evil life. I think that the modern preacher says far too little about either hell or heaven. There seems to be a good deal of agnosticism concerning both.

On the other hand, I entirely agree that hell is a state, and not a place; a condition, and not a mere locality. As Shakespeare says, a man himself is hell, and if a man loves what is bad

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the presence of God will be hell to him. It will be the greatest terror to him to think that God is near.

Drawing our argument from what we can see around us, there are hundreds of people alive to-day who are suffering torture in hells of their own making, and you cannot get away from the fact of retribution. Retribution is the natural, unavoidable result of wrong-doing, and retribution is a hell in itself.

As to the details of the hell that afflicts the unrepentant sinner in his future state, it is beyond our ken, but we may rest assured that the man who is unfaithful to duty and to the good that he knows, refusing the good when it is offered to him and indulging in wickedness, will suffer more terribly after death than many of us realise. I believe that the punishment of wilful wickedness which lies beyond the grave is far more dreadful than people imagine.

One has heard of sins which people can scarcely help committing. I think the idea of moral helplessness is a fatalism to which none of us ought to yield for a moment. We can

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help committing sin. There is help in God for us all. Besides, the thought of suffering in the after life does not involve the thought of an angry God torturing people for the sake of the torture. Rather it should suggest the thought of people suffering the inevitable consequences of their own wrong-doing. "Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap." Sin begets its own punishment, and hell is not the vengeance of God, but the inevitable penalty of disobedience to God's holy and righteous law.

You ask me if such suffering will be eternal. My own belief is that as long as a man or a woman persists in wrong-doing, so long the consequences of that wrong-doing will follow them. It is quite possible, even in this life, for a man to blight the whole of his future by one single act of mad folly and sin. I have seen it done again and again. I have seen a man wreck not only his own life, but the lives of his family, by what seemed to be a solitary act of wickedness or crime. It is impossible, therefore, to deny the inescapable consequences of sin in this world, and it is nothing more

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than reasonable to suppose that the consequences will follow a man into the next world also.

But what, you ask me, of the wrong-doing of the children, of the faults that are committed out of ignorance?

You may be sure that children, like the unenlightened heathen, are treated by God according to their knowledge or their ignorance. Where there is no knowledge there can be no responsibility. We have got certain standards of sin, but we may rely upon it that God's judgment is perfectly just. It is a judgment that takes everything into account—all temptation, all inherited temperament, all circumstances and all conditions that help to make it difficult for a man, a woman, or a little child to do what is right. It is all expressed in those words of our Lord: "And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever

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much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask more."

Be certain, then, that the judgment of God is absolutely and inflexibly just. He takes everything into consideration, whether it extenuates or aggravates our offences. He can never be less than just to friend or foe, and His mercy is an integral part of His justice.

For myself, I believe and preach that the consequences of men's actions will follow them into the future life; that every man will have to give account of himself to God, and that, as St. Paul teaches, he will receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad.

I preach that there will be a terrible awakening for people who have trifled with duty and conscience, and who have rejected the light. I preach that there must be something unutterably awful under the figures which our Lord used of the outer darkness, the undying worm, the unquenchable fire. I preach, and I sincerely believe, that there is some experience that is

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more terrible than we conceive in store for the wilful and unrepentant sinner, that character decides the question both here and hereafter, and that we are making character every day.

My preaching is very largely on the lines that to live in harmony with what we understand to be God's law is the truest heaven; to live out of harmony with that law is hell; and that we make our own hell or heaven on earth, and carry it with us when we go hence.

But I am not a Universalist. I don't believe God will ever force people into right-doing. On the contrary, I believe that some people will continue to live evil, and will grow worse and worse. They do it here under all sorts of influences, and we have no reasonable hope that anything that happens in the future will turn them away from their self-chosen path.

VII

MAKING THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME

BY THE REV. C. SILVESTER HORNE, M.A., M.P.

"THERE may be heaven, there must be hell," wrote Robert Browning. What he probably meant is that virtue is its own reward, and needs no further reward, but that a place of retribution is demanded by the unpunished sins and evils of the present life.

One does not see, however, why it is not equally possible to maintain that vice is its own punishment, and that there is no need to suggest external forms of torment; for impenitent wickedness carries in its own breast the sting and scourge that make up the essence of what we call hell.

There are passages in Scripture that might easily be pressed into our service to prove that hell does not mean anything different from

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certain conditions which sometimes hold in this life. "He that is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is unjust let him be unjust still." In other words, let him carry beyond this life the character that distinguished him here, and he will be in hell. Nothing more is needed. Such, as I need hardly point out, was Milton's view. He makes Satan say: "Where'er I go is hell; myself am hell."

There, in one ~~fundamental~~ ^{fundamental} epigram, the truth is expressed. My hell is in myself. Even if I were to present myself among the sons of God, and inhabit an outward heaven, I should be in reality in hell.

This is the doctrine that is most generally believed at the present time. Are we justified in saying that it was the teaching of Christ, and if so, did He mean to teach that there will be no influences in the next world that could possibly modify or regenerate the personality that is its own retribution? These are the two questions on which, perhaps, most depends in this controversy.

First of all, what are we justified in saying

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was the teaching of Christ? By far the most vivid piece of teaching is the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. I do not want to be guilty of exaggeration in any interpretation of that luminous allegory, but it does help us to answer the two questions I have suggested. The prayer of Dives in hell is that Lazarus may be sent to him on an errand of mercy. That prayer is not answered, because it cannot be. He is compelled to realise that between Lazarus and himself there is a great gulf fixed, a gulf which cannot be crossed. Who fixed that gulf? The answer is plain. The rich man himself fixed the gulf in this life, and in the life to come its existence cuts him off from hope and consolation. In this life he cut himself off from the brotherhood of man, and he finds that this loveless spirit has accompanied him beyond the gates of death, and constitutes his retribution in the world to come.

This is the fulfilment of Milton's saying, "Myself am hell." Unless there is something in the "self" which constitutes its own punishment, there is no hell; and unless the very

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capacity for repentance has died out from disuse, there is no eternal state that can be called hell.

But, granted these two conditions, eternal punishment is not the fable which it has appeared to many.

Before we can affirm that Jesus taught the existence of such an eternity of loss, however, we must ask whether there is not another inference to be drawn from the great parable. The last scene in the tragedy of Dives is of a soul awakening to a care for others, and a desire to save them from the misery itself has deserved. Dives beseeches that a messenger be sent to those he has left behind to warn them. He has forgotten his own suffering now in the realisation of the impending fate of some whom he has loved on earth. Surely this touch is not inserted in the parable to suggest that there is no repentance possible, even in hell.

On the other hand, we see that a soul is regaining there some disinterestedness of ambition and desire. It is surely not illegitimate to draw the conclusion that Christ intended to

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teach that even the fire of remorse in the future life may purify the spirit, and so prepare it for some higher and better state.

Nothing is more remarkable than the deliberateness with which our Lord leaves the future in obscurity—an obscurity so impressive that it is more solemn than the clearest revelation could have been. The one certainty is the certainty of punishment appropriate to the sins of earth, and inseparable from the self which we take with us into the Beyond. Surely that is enough for us to know. It lends solemnity to the life we are living here. It sets an infinite value on that self which we are cultivating to be either our bliss or bane on the other side of the veil.

VIII

NO WARRANT FOR ETERNAL DAMNATION

BY THE REV. FRANK BALLARD, D.D., M.A., B.SC.

THERE is no warrant at all for lurid assertions of physical suffering on the part of the unsaved. No language can sufficiently repudiate the ghastly horrors with which, in times past, the dark future has been travestied in the name of the Gospel. That it should ever have been possible in connection with Christianity to bid a child think what it will be "when the body has been lying on the same side on the scorching, broiling fire for a hundred million of years" is enough to make all Christendom shudder for shame.

There is to-day no need nor right to speak of "damnation." There is no Greek word in the whole New Testament answering to our modern term "damn." There is no "damned" man on

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earth, and there never will be any "damned" man hereafter. To read publicly in modern language, "He that believeth not shall be damned," is a gross misrepresentation, and equally unpardonable, seeing that the Revised Version is authoritatively at hand.

There never was, is, or will be, any right in the name of the Gospel of Christ to speak of "eternal torments." No father on earth deserving the name would ever think of tormenting his child for any grievous wrong that he might do. No figurative expression whatever of any passage of Scripture warrants our attributing to God a less real and tender fatherhood than our own.

There is no external infliction of vengeance of any kind. Punishment never signifies the mere exercise of arbitrary divine will-power expressed in anger. To-day's better understanding of the divine immanence shows how both "the goodness and severity of God" work ever *in* men, not on them. Whence it follows that every moral being decides for himself which of these shall rule his destiny.

There is no warrant whatever for suggesting

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that all the heathen are on the road to perdition, or will be "eternally lost" unless missionaries are sent to them. Paul's letter to the Romans ought long ago to have made this clear for ever.

There is no warrant whatever for assuming that the vast majority of the human race will be lost. Even so stern a pleader for "orthodoxy" as the late Dr. Randles expressly says: "We see no great extravagance in the opinion of those who compute that the proportion of the finally lost to the saved will be about as the population of the criminal part of the population to the rest."

When this life is over, real judgment awaits every man, based upon the twin facts of his moral free agency and his life's opportunities for exercising it. No better expression of this can be found than in the apostolic summary: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether good or bad."

Into this judgment will come the fairest and fullest consideration of all terrestrial differences

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in heredity and environment, on the plain principle of justice that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." That covers the whole human case. It is as easy for omniscient love to render to every man according to his best as it is for the divine immanence now working in physiology to furnish every man with an idiosyncrasy of nature.

The only and final Judge will be Christ Himself. Not as a spectacular Pronouncer of arbitrary personal feeling, but as the infallible Discerner and Declarer of all degrees of likeness, or unlikeness, to that divine holiness which was manifested for human appreciation in His own character.

Whatever there be of condemnation, it will be self-created, self-inflicted. All doom is but the natural and necessary consequence of character. All character results from habits, and these, in turn, only arise from acts which have embodied the genuine decisions of a moral being.

The essence of sin, as here considered, is wilful, and therefore positive rejection of the

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highest known through deliberate preference for the lower. How much men differ in tendencies towards either, proceeding from heredity and environment, God only knows. But the degree of resulting guiltiness is in each case safe in His hand, i.e. in the natural working out of the righteous consequences of wrong-doing when there is neither repentance nor desire for betterness.

All representations of the actual suffering involved in self-inflicted punishment are figurative, not literal, spiritual, not physical. This does not point to any lessening of reality, but to the truth that, whether it be greater or less, it arises from the internal action of the self, and not from the external imposition of God as being "angry" in the sense of human caprice or passion.

On the other side of the grave each man will find himself, as to character, where he was on this side. Forgiven or unforgiven, pure or impure, fondest of good or ill, drawn to or revolting from all the divinest known to him here. On these moral qualities death can have

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no effect whatever. It is not even an actual new beginning. Death is but an important crisis in the eternity which is as real as it will ever be.

There never has been, is, or will be, any "anger" of God which is not essentially wounded love. The very sanctity of inviolable moral law lies in the truth that it is the only way in which the divine desire and design—viz. the greatest blessedness for the greatest number—can be secured or maintained. Doom hereafter is the self-caused sequence of sin here. In the degree in which such human doom accumulates, the sorrow of God deepens.

The real terror, and, if realised, the unspeakable horror of the far future, is the helplessness of God! Omnipotence has here no application, seeing that not even omnipotence can do, or can be expected to do, the impossible. Future blessedness must mean future goodness, and goodness is but the love of the highest. But love, to be love, must be spontaneous. Coerced love is as unthinkable as a round square. The utmost that can ever be done towards compelling love is to appeal to a nature

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capable of it. The appeal is often in vain. It is quite possible that it may be so in perpetuity. For even Jesus Himself wept over Jerusalem with the confession of His own helplessness to save those who would not come to Him.

Yet, as above noted, it is certain that if the individual man survives the fact of death there must be continuity of personality. But all personality, as such, involves moral capacity. And this, again, necessarily involves capacity both to sin and to repent. There is nothing in death to destroy this capacity.

Thus the far, far future really rests, not with God, but with human character. "The question is not whether God will always forgive, but whether man can always repent. God's forgiveness is ever sure; man's repentance is never sure. Every act of sin weakens the will and lessens its power of resistance; and if the acts become habits, and the habits mould the character, the will may become completely paralysed and repentance become impossible."

Assuredly there is nothing in human death to alter the character of God. If He be loving

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now, He will be loving for ever. If He will welcome any penitent now, He will welcome every penitent for ever and ever. But if a man be not penitent here, what is to lead him to become such hereafter? Added knowledge, influences, and opportunities? Maybe. Maybe not. Of these we know nothing. That is the risk which, just in proportion as influences and opportunities have abounded here, becomes the dreadful menace of the unknown.

IX

HELL THAT IS MAN-MADE

BY CANON J. W. HORSLEY, M.A.

DIFFICULTIES in the way of believing in a state of future loss and pain have arisen largely from the errors and ignorance of what is called popular theology, which is the more popular as it is the less theological.

Popular theology, for instance, makes hell a place, and not a condition or state of life, whereas our present necessary conceptions of time and space and place can hardly conceivably remain when we have passed away from this world and no longer experience a condition of living in which these concepts are unavoidable as adjuncts to earthly modes of thought and experience.

And in this "place" popular theology has directed its attention chiefly to the idea of pain,

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whereas we have no knowledge of what sort of pain can be felt in the new conditions of life elsewhere, however much justice would demand that something of the nature of pain should be the portion of the wilfully sinful who are finally impenitent.

Yet at the same time the stage being called "damnation" recalls us to the fact that it is a condition of loss (*damnum*) more than of pain (*poena*). Opportunities, as we look back, are seen to have been lost—even the capacity for real and high joys has been lost—and that by our own fault and wilful choice. This state is one which men "have heaped unto themselves," not a crushing mountain suddenly hurled at them by a Superior Power.

Again, popular theology has imagined all punishment or loss, in the self-caused exclusion from what might have been, to be indiscriminate; as if all varying degrees, whether of vice or virtue, were to be obliterated by the mere act of dying. Yet in the antithetical conception of "that perfect vision of God's which we,

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for lack of words, call heaven," it has been easy to conceive of degrees in pain and joy, according to the words I have read to-day at a funeral, "as one star differeth from another star in glory"—though all in the same firmament.

Is there a hell? If not, neither is there a heaven.

Is there a hell? If one can be made and experienced here, how will our passage into timelessness cause it not to be, or to cease "after a time" when there is no more time? In the cry of David in the fifty-first Psalm: "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," here is the voice of one who has made hell for himself, and felt it more as a loss—a damnation—than as a pain of sense, and of one who fears that it might be continued, or even final.

"Cursed is" (not "be"), says our Communion Service, the man who wilfully breaks this or the other known law, and it warns him that however his wish may be father to the thought

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that no penalty will ensue, it has already fallen upon him, and there it will remain until removed by repentance.

Science does not say, "Break my laws if you like, it will be all right in the long run." Neither does God; nor do His vicegerents, our conscience and our reason. Therefore I find neither sanity nor brotherly kindness in writing Heaven with a large H and hell with a small one; of shouting as to the unearned increment of future happiness and only whispering occasionally and with reserve as to the Nemesis which comes to the self-created state and character formed by resistance to the pleading cry which we could never quite silence, "Why will ye die?"

If we are but will-less automata, as Determinists imagine, of course there is neither reward nor punishment, gain nor loss, to be made or earned here or hereafter. If, however, we have our will and power of choice, the idea and the fact of loss or gain is ever present to us. And if the result of a deliberate and unbroken evil choice is to be unknown to us and

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unexperienced by us a hundred years hence, then the *onus probandi* is with those who hold this to be truth, and they must explain why "conscience doth make cowards" of the evil-doers.

X

HELL A PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY

BY THE REV. DINSDALE T. YOUNG

I PREACHED some time ago, here at Wesley's Chapel, on "Is There a Devil?" The chapel was full to overflowing. I think this is an indication that a far greater interest is taken in the solemn things of eternity than most people realise.

I have just been reading over again the life of Charles Kingsley. Charles Kingsley was one of the brightest and liveliest of Christians that ever lived, but he was always dwelling on death and eternity, and not long before he passed away he said: "I have looked forward to this hour all my life with a most intense and reverent curiosity." I believe that represents the spirit of hosts of men and women, especially of intelligent men and women. They won't own to it sometimes, if you suggest it

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to them; they laugh it off. But I believe that deep down in their hearts there is a real interest—a very serious interest—in the question of the everlasting; and I should be disposed to assert that it is an argument of no little force for the existence of a hell that so many people contemplate the question.

The problem touches the instincts of the mind and heart. The remark has been made—I forget by whom—that “Hell is a philosophical necessity,” and I am convinced that there is deep truth in that statement. If we had no Bible, and no churches, and no sermons, still hell would be a philosophical necessity. It seems to me, quite apart from Divine revelation, that if a man thinks and argues, granted that there is a God, and that that God speaks in conscience, there surely must be a doom, whatever the nature of that doom, for all who reject God’s love.

That is a great reason why I believe that hell is a philosophical necessity.

Then I believe in hell because it is a matter of Divine revelation. It seems to me that no

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one can read the Bible candidly without subscribing to the doctrine that there is a hell. Nothing is more plainly revealed in the pages of the Scripture than that awful fact. And it seems to me that in this matter Divine revelation sustains philosophy, and philosophy in its turn supports Divine revelation. So that both philosophically and scripturally I believe in a hell.

We must remember that very much of the objection to such a belief has arisen through the exaggerated representations of hell which have been given. If men had kept to the Bible teaching rather than to Dantean pictures and to the pictures of certain preachers whose imaginations have carried them beyond all scriptural revelation, they would not have felt that obstacle which they have felt to the belief in hell. Many when they have spoken and written about hell have been wise above what is written. There are no pictures in the Bible of an awful hell such as have been drawn by some writers and by some preachers.

As a matter of fact, the Bible is very reticent

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as to hell. It seems to be content to reveal the awful fact of its existence rather than to portray definite pictures of that place of doom.

Whether hell is a locality or not we cannot be sure. The resurrection of the body, it seems to me, would suggest that hell is a locality. But all such statements as that there is literal fire are statements that go beyond the teaching of Scripture. It is a very impressive fact, too, that the Bible teaching on the subject of hell is all expressed in metaphor, and no one has a right to accept metaphor as literal. But the solemn point to be remembered is that these metaphors represent realities. The danger is that people will argue that because these are metaphors they do not represent realities. The realities may be more awful than the metaphors suggest.

We have to remember, also, that the teaching of Scripture is that none will be cast into hell except those who deliberately and finally reject Christ.

It is a matter of inference, but my own distinct inference is that the number of such will

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be very small. I am an optimist on that point, and I would repeat it : I believe that the number who deliberately and finally reject Christ will be an extremely limited number. It is more than difficult to judge of people's inward state by any outward manifestations, and far more people are Christians at heart than the Churches often imagine.

Furthermore, I believe there are multitudes of people who in the last moments of their lives accept the Saviour Whom they may have rejected during their lifetime, and I am not one to spurn the idea of death-bed repentance. I believe that the merciful Saviour receives at the last moment multitudes who cry to Him, and it seems to me that such points should be kept in view by all who study the question of hell.

We must remember that the doctrine of hell was taught by our Lord Himself, and though taught with a great reservation it was also taught with most solemn emphasis. When we remember that the Saviour spoke more solemnly of hell than anyone else ever spoke, we have, for

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all who accept His teaching, an incontrovertible argument for the existence of such a place of doom.

Then we have always to remember our responsibility for the offer of the Gospel. The fact that needs to be continually iterated is that everyone may escape hell. The Gospel makes a universal appeal, and it makes an appeal that the simplest and most ignorant can realise and understand. The conditions of salvation are conditions that a little child, or the most ignorant of men and women, can easily comprehend, and no soul of man that will accept Christ as a personal Saviour shall ever know the mystery of hell.

Then we need to take into account the great Redemption. Those who believe, as I believe, in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of the whole world, feel that they must accept the doctrine of hell. For what lesser fate can they expect who, having heard the offer of the Gospel, deliberately reject it?

It seems to me that when we remember the sufferings of our Saviour and the infinite price

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He paid for the redemption of man, we cannot think that there can be any lesser fate for those who turn their back upon His offer.

At the same time I believe that the first duty of the Christian pulpit is not to preach hell but to preach salvation and to make it plain—gloriously plain—that everyone may know the blessedness of heaven rather than the suffering of hell.

Whilst this is true, however, I am of opinion that they incur an enormous responsibility who suppress the revealed fact of hell. There is a great danger of the average Christian pulpit yielding to unfaithfulness. It is a great part of the commission of the Christian minister to warn men, and unless men are warned it seems to me that the Christian ministry cannot escape grave responsibility for the eternal fate of those who listen to it.

XI

HELL THROUGH THE LOVE OF GOD

BY THE REV. ARNOLD T. PINCHARD

Is there a Hell? That's a question to which there can be but one answer for all Catholics, whether they happen to be Papists or whether they be Anglicans or Orthodox Easterns. It is a good thing to have such a question as this plainly decided, because it keeps one on the right lines when one adventures on a voyage of legitimate speculation on the subject itself.

It is easier to think about the possibilities of hell if one keeps in view the complementary beliefs of heaven and purgatory; since, in fact, all three ideas are so closely connected that, if one holds the doctrine of personal immortality in the Christian sense, one must also hold all of these three beliefs, or none of them.

During the last century and a half there has

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been a very remarkable return of religious feeling towards a position of normal equilibrium in regard to the state of the departed; and there can be no doubt that certain perfectly legitimate postulates do underlie the doctrines of purgatory and of hell.

It is quite reasonable and eminently desirable, within those limits which reverence and our inevitable ignorance alike impose, that we should speculate as to the condition of the departed, and as to the circumstances in which they undergo the discipline of purgatory or the punishment of hell. There are four considerations which one should bear in mind in regard to this matter :

(1) When we speak of the "Immortality of the Soul," we claim that the soul enjoys after death a state of consciousness, either heightened above, or at least equal to, that which it has enjoyed during this period of human life.

(2) By "Purgatory" we understand a state, or place, or condition in which "middle souls" complete their preparation for heaven. What

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we mean by "middle souls" may best be understood by referring to the utterance of a famous Jew, Rabbi Jochanan of America, who declares that God keeps three books, in one of which are written the names of souls that are perfectly good; in another those of souls that are incorrigibly given to evil; and in the third those of the great mass of mankind whose dispositions at death are definitely towards light and righteousness, but who are nevertheless in a state of manifest imperfection.

(3) By "Hell" we understand a state, or condition, or place, in which Spirit-souls incorrigibly given over by their own act of will to evil, and incapable of reconciliation with God, remain in an endless life of misery, distress, and unavailing remorse.

(4) It is, moreover, necessary to remember, in considering the state of the departed in their relation to God, that there must ever be throughout the several grades of life hereafter two, and two only, realities of being, i.e. those of the Spirit-man and of the Spirit-God in various states of inter-relation with one another.

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And, secondly, one must remember that in every grade this state of inter-relation is extraordinarily intimate, because the immanent presence of the one God in each soul is intrinsically identical, whether it be in heaven, purgatory, or hell.

What, then, are we to understand by the terrific phraseology which Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church alike employ?

The fires of hell! The fires of purgatory! What do these mean?

If we turn to the Fathers of the Church we shall get very conflicting answers.

Let us take the Greeks first. St. Clement of Alexandria declares that this fire is a "rational and spiritual fire that penetrates the soul." Origen says that each sinner lights the flame of his own fire—that his conscience is agitated and pierced by its own pricks. St. John of Damascus explicitly declares his belief that this is "*not* a material fire."

The Latins, on the other hand, are not by any means of one mind. St. Ambrose accounts the everlasting fire as "not a fire of bodily

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flames"; while St. Augustine likens the purgatorial fire to the fire of this-world sufferings; and compares the fire of hereafter to the pain which the soul suffers, even in this life, by the loss of the things that it has falsely loved. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the fire of purgatory is material and the same as the fire of hell. And so, indeed, do all the scholastics; and hereby they find themselves involved in endless difficulties in their endeavours to explain how a material fire can possibly affect the immaterial spirit. This difficulty is practically insuperable; perhaps more definitely so to the modern than to the mediæval mind.

We see, then, that the doctors of the Church are not in agreement about this matter, and it is certain that no definition or solemn judgment of the Church affirms the material character of the fires of purgatory. It follows that we are free to try to understand whence the pains of purgatory and hell alike derive their energy, and in what their force and power really consist.

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First, then, let us consider that in the material world we are aware of one sunlight, and one fire-heat, which are everywhere the same expression of the same energy; and yet we find that this one light (and heat) does, nevertheless, vary indefinitely in its effects, owing to the varying conditions and circumstances under which light (and heat) is brought into contact with different bodies. Let us therefore further ask whether one may not find in the spiritual sphere one supreme spiritual energy and influence, ever self-identical, which may be assimilated or resisted by lesser spirits so as inevitably to produce in themselves either joyous or mixed or painful states of feeling, since all spirits have in them the power of individual resistance, and yet none can eradicate or evade the sense and impression of that energy within their deepest selves.

Here we have an impressive and spiritual idea which may perhaps help us to understand the truth, beauty and terror of the symbolism of fire as it is used to describe the pains of purgatory and hell alike. We may even find

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that the same light, which produces a burning and painful impression in one soul in hell, may produce a condition of extraordinary joy and delight in another soul, so as to secure in that soul a state of utter and final bliss.

Here, then, we have a simplification at once intelligible and convincing. In every grade of life beyond the grave, fire becomes the appropriate symbol of the varying impressions produced by the presence of God in, and by the insatiable demand of the love of God upon, Spirit-souls, according to the differing attitudes of those souls towards Him.

The love of God works strenuously in and upon every Spirit-soul—and that everywhere. In the Spirit-soul that has been wrought into perfect harmony with the will of God by experience and discipline, the effect of the presence of love—that is of God—in the soul is to produce a condition of supreme and perfect bliss. But where the Spirit-soul has not yet been fully “transformed into God”; or where the soul is incorrigibly averse to God (in spite of some

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lingering power of appreciation of that which it is for ever bound to resist)—in each of these latter cases the love of God is felt as nothing less than a “consuming fire” by the Spirit-soul, in which His immanent Presence eternally abides.

Thus it appears (terrible as the paradox may sound) that the love of God is the efficient cause of the burning pains of hell and purgatory, no less than of the unimaginable joy and delight of heaven.

At this point let us recall the fact of the intimacy of the relation which must necessarily exist between Spirit-man and Spirit-God in every grade of the future life; for the persistence of life and consciousness in the Spirit-man necessarily involves the upholding of that life by means of the intrinsically identical presence of the one God in each and all. And further, let us remember that the postulates of immortality require that no soul can become entirely dead to the demand and the attraction of the Divine Love and the Divine Presence, even in hell.

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St. Catherine of Genoa says: "The ray of God's mercy shines even in hell." And St. Thomas Aquinas rightly points out that "Evil cannot exist pure without the admixture of good in the same manner as the supreme good exists free from all admixture of evil. . . . Those who are detained in hell are not bereft of all good."

Herein, then, is found the psychological explanation of the desperately painful effort of the impression of the love of God upon a soul, which is aware of all that love offers, as well as of its own eternal incapacity ever to respond.

It is lawful, therefore, in this speculation to hold that it is the love of God which makes hell hell for the incorrigible Spirit-soul—that it is the love of God which makes purgatory purgatory for the sin-defiled and longing soul, which can as yet only partially respond to and receive the light of the love of God; and that it is the love of God which makes heaven heaven for the soul which has been utterly cleansed without and within, in which no

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obstacle opposes the free entrance and passage of the love of God, which submits and surrenders itself freely and unreservedly to that influence and responds with gladness to its least demand.

XII

HELL COMPLETES THE UNIVERSE

BY THE REV. RICHARD ROBERTS

THE universe would not be complete without a hell. This does not mean that hell has a specific location. All that is implied in the idea of hell is that there is in the after-life a condition in which sin unrepented and unforgiven meets its "due recompense of reward." Whether that condition is a permanent one is another question.

The existence of hell is, of course, bound up with the larger question of the future life. If one accepts the doctrine of a future life, then a doctrine of hell seems to be inevitable. This is not the point at which to discuss the future life; but let it be once granted that our personal selves persist through death, that we are not extinguished when our bodies are discarded, and the existence of hell becomes a necessity

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of thought. To reflect that both General Booth and Dr. Crippen have departed this life and have presumably entered upon another, is to see at once that any conception of moral government in the universe demands the idea of a hell. It is inconceivable that these two men stand to-day in the same state.

To suppose it were to involve oneself in a moral topsy-turvydom which would be fatal to the most elementary right conduct. There is in life, as we see it, a law of compensation; but we are bound to recognise that this law does not work out completely in this world of sense. We are compelled, therefore, to infer that the law operates beyond this world and works out to an issue in another world. Otherwise we could have no security for that notion of ultimate and absolute justice which is in the long run the only possible foundation for a sound social structure.

But the nature of hell is a matter upon which we can only speculate vaguely. "The lake burning with fire and brimstone" and other images of the same type convey no reality to

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our minds. We must conceive of hell in ethical terms. But once it is admitted that we do not lose our personal identity at death, we have perhaps a clue to the inwardness of the condition. We, our unchanged selves, shall find ourselves in a changed environment. But even thus early in our argument we must call a halt, for we have to admit that we know nothing of the nature of this change of environment. We have neither the terms of thought nor of speech in which to express the values of the future life. Words like "eternal" and "everlasting" are only human ways of recognising a mystery without elucidating it. The only supposition which we can safely make is that since life in the flesh is sustained by the co-ordination of our physical powers to our physical surroundings, and since the future life is obviously not life in the flesh, our future condition will probably be free from those limitations of place, and possibly of time, by which we are controlled in this world. Hence we infer that death is a raising of life to larger dimensions. We shall be over there our own

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identical selves, but the scale of life will be much greater. He that is filthy will be filthy still; but his filthiness will be raised to the dimensions of eternity, whatever those may be. Anyway, *that* will be his hell.

There is another consideration to be borne in mind. The essence of what we call sin is disobedience to God; it is a thing which has its roots in the soul. But the instruments and occasions of sin are carnal, material and temporal. The form of sin is dependent upon its instruments and occasions, and these pass away from us when we pass out of the world. The craving which found its satisfactions through them will remain, and it is hard to conceive of a more intolerable hell than that in which we are left with the craving and bereft of the opportunities of satisfying it. That is how Jesus defines hell. It is the place where "their worm dieth not and their fires are not quenched." It is a condition in which a man suffers the fires of lust and the torments of desire without possessing the means of gratifying or assuaging them.

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But does this last for ever? May not the sinner, after passing through the purging fires of retribution, win through at last into the peace of God? It is useless to answer this question in a dogmatic way. The Scriptures throw little light upon it, and we can only proceed by way of inference. Those whose emphasis goes on to the holiness of God, and consequently on to the enormity of sin, logically conclude that, as the offence of sin is an offence against infinite holiness, its consequences must be infinite—that is, eternal. On the other hand, those whose inclination is to dwell upon the love of God argue that a loving Creator could not tolerate the thought of any creatures of His, however reprobate, passing through endlessness of retributive suffering. And still others, who are optimists by nature, say that as the good must at last triumph, hell must some time exhaust itself. One has to recognise the power of all these arguments, and then cast one's vote in favour of what is regarded as the greater probability.

What settles the matter in the end for each

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one of us is our own temperamental bias. None of us knows of a surety. The best we can do is to hold an opinion—a strictly personal and private opinion—on the matter.

I am free to say that my hope (I have not the data to form a settled conviction, and no man has) is that at last all men will be saved. But no man has any right to presume on this hope. We think in our own limited, futile way, and speculate and guess about the future life, but when we pass through the veil things will probably be very different from our imaginings, and many a surprise will be waiting us after we pass through the last river. We shall see how wild our guesses were; how utterly trivial and puerile all our thinking about the ways of God. But there are some things which we shall find without any doubt. We shall see that "what a man sows that he shall also reap," that if he has sown the wind he shall reap the whirlwind. We shall see that the ways of the Lord are equal, and we shall understand beyond any dubiety that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

XIII

THE CATHOLIC STANDPOINT

BY MONSIGNOR ROBERT HUGH BENSON, M.A.

CATHOLICS believe in hell for the single reason that the fact of it is one of those dogmas guaranteed to them and defined by the Church, which, they believe, has received from Jesus Christ inerrancy in matters of faith. It is, therefore, quite possible for some Catholics (as indeed some of them do) to say that as individuals they cannot understand or justify the idea of hell, even though they most firmly believe in the dogma since it comes to them, they are persuaded, on divine authority. They are content, that is to say, to "become like little children," and to take it whole-heartedly on faith.

But that does not mean that there are no arguments which may not help their faith; indeed, there are a great many.

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(1) To deny the possibility of an eternal exclusion from God's presence is to deny, implicitly, the reality of man's free will. If everyone is to go to heaven finally, whether they choose it or not, then life is only a kind of game, and men mere pawns that are all put back into the box at the end. Further, to say that finally everyone *will* choose heaven—i.e. God's side—is only another way of saying that they cannot help choosing heaven; and then, again, where is free will, and where is the dignity of man?

(2) The Catholic teaching is that (as Father Faber somewhere expresses it in words such as the following) "no soul will finally be lost which has not had the Father's arms cast about her and the bright eyes of God's love look into her own, and has not, knowingly, rejected that love." We do not believe that souls are lost through a mere mistake, or through circumstances over which they have had no control. A sin that damns must be a wilful sin, known as sin, and a grave matter. The "malice" of such a sin, then, is simply inconceivable. It

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is a direct outrage upon what a man knows to have a supreme claim upon him. Of course, in days when sin is explained away, when we are informed that it is merely a matter of heredity or environment, or the result of irresistible impulses—when man, that is to say, is represented as having no real will of his own—hell vanishes too. It would be intolerable to think that a soul which has no choice at all could be sent to eternal misery on that account. But if a man accepts Christian teaching as to sin, and understands even a fraction of sin's hideous insolence and wantonness, I cannot conceive how he can gravely doubt that it merits hell. On the other hand, too, he will find himself overwhelmed with gratitude to a God who will accept even one single act of true and loving sorrow for sin, even on a death-bed, as the means by which, after a life of outrage and wilful evil, the soul may win heaven instead.

(3) If a man accepts the atonement of Christ, I do not see how he can doubt the dogma of hell. Is it credible that the Son of God should

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have become Man and died on the cross merely to save men from the short and temporal consequences of sin? Does not the infinity of the sacrifice imply an infinity of punishment as that from which the sacrifice was intended to deliver those who would accept it?

Of course, to the non-Christian all three of these arguments will mean little or nothing. For the non-Christian not only rejects the atonement of Christ and the malice of sin and the absolute holiness of God, but he is content also, it would seem, to regard himself as a mere animal that can neither merit nor demerit. Once, however, believe that God is love, and we are compelled to believe that God desires human love. But love is only love when it is freely given; and that which can be freely given can be freely refused. Very well; hell is the eternal state of those who have finally and eternally refused their love to God and have preferred to love themselves. So they have what they choose and do not have what they reject. They possess themselves to all eternity

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and are without God. Is it possible to imagine a more appalling hell?

Finally, it is a remarkable consideration for Catholics that whereas three hundred and fifty years ago they were supposed by Protestants to be in error for believing in Purgatory, now they are commonly supposed to be in error for believing in anything else! For the modern conventional idea as to the state of souls after death, as held by those who do not believe in hell, resembles very remarkably the Catholic dogma of purgatory.

The Catholic Church, however, believes in both, as she always has—in purgatory for those souls who, although very unsatisfactory, do not leave this world in a state of actual enmity with God; and in hell for those who, however satisfactory in other respects, do die in that state of final and eternal enmity.

XIV

HELL AS CONCEIVED BY THE JEWS

BY THE REV. M. HYAMSON, LL.D.

THE Jewish belief is that salvation does not depend on acceptance of a special faith—good people, whatever their race, creed, or colour, will have their portion in the world to come.

I mention this point first because it is in antithesis to the doctrine accepted by some members of another creed that salvation depends on faith. The Jewish doctrine is that God rewards those who keep His commandments, and punishes those who transgress them. What the nature of the reward or punishment will be in the life hereafter no one can tell. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, what the Almighty will do to those who wait for Him."

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But the nature of this recompense is not a matter of doctrine. Jewish fancy and imagination, like the fancy and imagination of members of other faiths and races, has played about the subject, but positive knowledge is obviously beyond our ken.

This is, on the whole, just as well for us, for if we knew the exact character and extent of the compensation or retribution in a future life for each of our actions in this, pure motive would cease, there would be no merit in doing right, or in refraining from wrong. Most of us, it is to be feared, would calculate the sacrifices we bring and the restraints to which we submit in this life against the gains or losses resulting from them in the future state. We would lead good and moral lives, not for the sake of goodness, but for the sake of profit. The highest happiness could never be realised. Human conduct would lack disinterestedness. It would degenerate to a business calculation, a balancing of advantage and disadvantage. But, thanks to the merciful uncertainty of our knowledge, virtue is its own reward in this

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world, and the happiness which will be our portion in the world to come will be a pure, holy, unsullied bliss.

The Jews do not possess any authorised dogmatic teaching on the subject of punishment hereafter. Isaiah, in the last verse of his book, says: "Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." But this clearly is metaphor when applied to the immortal soul.

With regard to the duration of future punishment, the overwhelming trend of Jewish opinion is against any belief in the eternity of punishment. According to the Talmud, there is no everlasting damnation. Even for the worst of sinners there is only temporary punishment, and that of a purificatory character.

Emanuel Deutsch, in his "Literary Remains," quotes the Rabbinical saying, "'There is a space of only two fingers'-breadth between hell and heaven.' The sinner has but to repent sincerely, and the gates of everlasting bliss will spring open."

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Then there is another authority, Hamburger, who, in his *Encyclopædia*, says: "The teachings of the Talmud are decidedly against any belief in eternal punishment."

The great Jewish teachers preferred to dwell upon the recompense of the good rather than upon the retribution of the wicked. Stronger than their fear of justice was their belief in the Divine mercy. And surely there is a powerful argument against any belief in everlasting woe in the words of Psalm ciii. verse 9: "He will not contend for ever, neither will He retain His anger to eternity."

Endless torments are in flagrant contradiction to the goodness of God, as expressed in His Holy Word. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." (Exodus xxxiv. 6 and 7). And in the fifth verse of the thirtieth Psalm we are assured that "His wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, but His favour a lifetime."

It would be inconsistent with the perfect

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justice of God if there were no punishment in a future life for the wicked man who prospers in this world, and no reward for the good man who experiences adversity; but the idea that a loving God should inflict eternal perdition upon a soul for the sins committed during our brief stay on earth is equally inconsistent with that perfect justice. We are certainly told to fear God, to dread His displeasure, not, however, as we would fear an all-powerful tyrant, but simply as we would fear to incur the righteous indignation of a father or to forfeit a father's love. "For a moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer."

There is hope even for the reprobates who have passed away impenitent; hence the Jews have prayers for the dead. And children, by their prayers and good lives, can secure bliss hereafter for their parents—can raise their parents to Paradise.

It is, in my opinion, useless for mortals

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whose lives and experiences are limited in space to discuss the question as to whether hell is a locality or a state. The question is as ridiculous as the old scholastic problem : How many millions of souls can rest on the point of a pin? The painting of life after death as a hideous horror and of hell as a Dantesque region of actual fire and flame are equally senseless. Bacon says : "Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased by tales, so is the other." The Jews do not believe in material hell fire.

The Jewish mind is of a practical character, and its views can be summed up in two sentences. The first sentence is this : "Repentance and good deeds are a shield against all punishments"; and the second, "One hour's bliss in the life hereafter is worth more than the whole of our life on earth; yet better one hour spent in good deeds on earth than the whole of happiness in the life hereafter."

In conclusion, let me say that I have purposely endeavoured in this article to avoid any-

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thing of a controversial character, for the simple reason that it is part of the Jewish religion to inculcate in its professors and adherents a respect for the creeds of other people and tolerance towards their faiths.

XV

A SOCIALIST'S VIEW

BY THE HON. AND REV. JAMES GRANVILLE
ADDERLEY, M.A.

It would certainly be a bold thing for a Christian to answer "No" to this question. But if the question were put thus: Are Christians called upon to believe in the sort of hell described by the late Charles Haddon Spurgeon or Jonathan Edwards? I should unhesitatingly answer in the negative.

I do not see how we can, with our Lord's words before us, deny the possibility of a human will resisting God to the uttermost, and if it does so it must *ipso facto* be without God, which is hell. I think we arrive at a better idea both of heaven and hell by dwelling on the positive aspect of "eternal life" as taught us in the Gospel. It is "to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." I take it that this

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means that the fullness of human life, "the life which is life indeed," is enjoyed by those who get into communion with God by the Way which is Jesus Christ. Putting their faith in Him, getting rid of sin by a true repentance and trust in His atonement, praying for God's grace and receiving it in His appointed ways, they come into communion with God and begin to enjoy the true life here and must have it for ever hereafter. Heaven is the enjoyment of the presence of God. Hell is the reverse. It is eternal death.

The Bible seems to insist on the tremendous importance of embracing the hope of this before death, but I do not think there is anything to prevent our believing that, provided we have, with however feeble a faith, desired God, we shall not ultimately miss Him. Our Lord's teaching in such parables as that of the "Lost Coin" or the "Lost Sheep" or the "Lost Son" seems to show that there is no end to the seeking by God for the soul that has gone astray. The Catholic doctrine of purification after death seems to give an almost endless hope. The best

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of men die without complete conformity to the will of God, and without complete contrition. The worst of men die probably with some glimmering faith in God as the highest and Christ as the Way. Does the Bible or the Church compel us to believe that either the former is ready for heaven or the latter thrust out for ever? To this I reply "No." I believe that the former after death is gradually acquiring that absolute conformity to God and that absolute contrition without which he cannot wholly enjoy God and eternal life. The other is being taught and led on by the power of Christ, who Himself in His human nature on the Cross entered into the fullness of human conformity to God and human sorrow for human sin. Our prayers follow the departed because they need them just as much (if not more) after as before death.

If it be asked how this squares with the Athanasian Creed, I should say that the creed in question is a canticle rather than a creed, and expresses the joint belief of all Christians concerning their own faith without any reflection

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on outsiders. It is a united chorus of those who have found the inestimable benefit of worshipping the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. They know God, and have found in that knowledge the possession of the eternal life. To be without this would be to them an "everlasting perishing," "a state of eternal dying." Hence they warn their fellow Christians never to depart from this blessed thing. Again, if it be asked whether this way of looking at the question does not make people careless of a good life, I can only say that we must get into the spirit of Saint Francis Xavier's hymn and take the risk in the interests of truth :

My God, I love Thee not because
I hope for Heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Are lost eternally.

I think that the more hopeful view of the hereafter, which is shown now by the modern disgust with Calvinism and the patience of Protestants with the doctrine of purgatory (due, probably, to Newman's "Dream of Gerontius"),

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so far from making people careless, has made them altogether stronger and more vigorous Christians. It is certainly remarkable that what divided Christians so much at the time of the Reformation now seems to be bringing them together.

I also think that there is much food for thought in John Ball's reputed saying that "Heaven is fellowship, and the want of fellowship is hell." As a socialist, I believe that unbridled competition and the results of sweating and injustice and oppression are the direct outcome of the commercial spirit in religion which the denial of hope for the vast majority of mankind, and the bargaining with God, represented by some post-Reformation theology, engenders. As we are getting out of this we are getting out of the other. Fellowship is the note of modern sociology. Internationalism is the note of modern ideals. War and destitution and slums are the hellish expression of old ideals. Peace and justice and joy and brotherhood, which, however far off at present, are on their way, are the expression of a belief in a world-

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wide purgatory which is paving the way to the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth. My prayer is that the Church may not be in the background and leave it to so-called secularist reformers to hasten this coming of the Lord.

XVI

A DEFENCE OF THE HELL OF THE BIBLE

BY THE REV. A. C. DIXON, B.A., D.D.

"GONE for ever," said a New York preacher, "is Dante's Inferno and Michael Angelo's Last Judgment." And yet within less than a mile of the pulpit from which these words were spoken, infernos fearful as Dante's were in full blast, and judgments upon sin and sinners more terrible than Michael Angelo's were being executed. S-i-n spells "hell" in this world and the next. It is no nightmare of mediæval darkness. It is not the hallucination of a disordered brain. It is a fact which anyone with open eyes must see. The smoke of torment ascends here from the house of shame, the public-house, the drunkard's home, the divorce court, the prison, the gallows, the madhouse, the gambling den, and the lives of men and women

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who are burning in the furnace of their own lusts.

It may not suit our æsthetic tastes, but our dislike of the situation does not affect the fact. "I hate the very thought of hell," exclaimed a cultured lady. So do I. And I hate the very thought of murders, adulteries, thefts, and gibbets; but my hatred does not destroy the facts. I hate snakes, but in spite of my hatred they continue to crawl and hiss and bite.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." They are not driven. No High Sheriff of the universe is needed to arrest them and by force cast them into hell.

When the wicked, in the flashlight of the Judgment Day, shall see themselves and their sins as they are, they will accept everlasting punishment as just retribution. Their sense of justice will approve it. It would appear to them an incongruous thing for God to take them to heaven; as incongruous, indeed, as it would appear to a guilty, impenitent criminal if the

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King of England, instead of sending him to prison, as he deserves, should take him into the palace as an associate for his wife and children.

And, sad to say, the wicked, if they act then as many of them do now, will choose hell rather than heaven. I know men who prefer hell to heaven. A heaven on earth is open to them every day, but they turn it into the hell of sinful indulgence.

Now, is it right that there should be a hell for the wicked? Can the hell of the Bible be defended on ethical grounds? I believe it can be, and for the following reasons :

1. It is right to separate the bad from the good.

It is well known that three Greek words in the New Testament are translated "hell." One of them is "Hades," which means simply the world of the dead, including both bad and good.

Another word is the Greek "Tartarus," which meant in ancient mythology the underworld of darkness. And by using this word the Holy Spirit would have us understand that, however

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mistaken were the pagans in many things, they were right in believing that the bad would at death go to an underworld of darkness. And this is merely the stamp of God's approval upon the universal consciousness of mankind. All people, savage and civilised, believe that what they regard as wrong should be punished.

The third word translated "hell" is "Gehenna," which was the name given to the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, into which the garbage of the city was cast and there burned. At any time of day or night the fires, with their ascending smoke, could be seen in this valley. Jesus makes it the symbol of hell, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

Now, is it right for a city to have a Valley of Hinnom into which the refuse shall be cast? Or should the city leave its refuse to decay in its streets and in the cellars of its houses, filling the air with contagion and death?

There are no two opinions on this subject among civilised people. Every garbage barrel,

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therefore, is an argument for hell. Those who refuse life in God become "refuse" in character sooner or later, and in the nature of things must be removed to a place apart.

A cemetery is a necessity. The bodies of the dead must not be left in the homes of the living. A little child died in the family of a former parishioner; the poor mother, crazed with grief, would not consent to its burial. She stood like Rizpah over its little lifeless body, and would not allow undertaker or husband to touch it. After a week of such heartrending experience, the husband was compelled to remove her by force to another room, while some friends went with the little form to the cemetery. To have kept the dead with the living would have been unkindness to the living and have done the dead no good. And thus every cemetery is an argument for hell. The spiritually dead soul is like a dead body, in that it is in a state of moral putrefaction and carries with it the deadly contagion of sin. If it refuses to receive life it must of necessity be placed apart with its spiritually dead companions.

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2. It is right to punish sin. This, as we have seen, is universally accepted.

There is a natural and a positive punishment. Sin brings its own punishment, while a Government has a right to punish sin when it develops into crime. A man kills another, and as a natural result suffers terrible remorse of conscience. But remorse of conscience does not satisfy the demands of justice, for there has been not only sin against his own soul, but crime against the commonwealth. Sin is its own Nemesis; and yet there is "the wrath of God revealed against unrighteousness." It is the wrath of the Lamb, more terrible, indeed, than the wrath of the lion—the wrath of gentleness against brutality, of kindness against cruelty, of chastity against unchastity, of truth against falsehood, of love against hatred, of holiness against sin, of light against darkness, of health against disease. Such is the wrath of the Lamb. It needs to be re-stated that there is something in God for sinners to fear. He is no moral weakling who, prompted by soft sentimentalism, permits criminals to destroy His

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righteous government. The preaching of this god of putty has been long enough filling hell, here and hereafter, with victims.

And yet God need not interfere otherwise than to protect the interests of his loyal subjects and obedient children. Sin left to itself makes hell. "Wickedness," says Isaiah, "burneth as a fire."

Eliminate, if you please, all thought of literal fire, but there is no mitigation of suffering. I verily believe that there are persons in this world who suffer so intensely from an evil conscience, in the flames of memory, reason and imagination, that to thrust their hand into a furnace of fire and burn it off would be a temporary relief. The fires which burn the soul are hotter than the fires which consume the body.

If the soul, with infinite capacity for good or evil, chooses the evil, it develops downward through eternity. Terrible thought! And yet the fact is in progress before our eyes.

3. It is right to have degrees of punishment.

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This principle is admitted by every court of justice in every civilised land.

“That servant which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes” (Luke xii. 47, 48). “Everlasting” does not mean “equal” or “infinite.” Everlasting punishment will certainly follow everlasting sinning, the degree of punishment being in proportion to the sin. It is reasonable to conclude that if a man will not repent in this world, with an environment of good and evil, he will not repent in the next world, where there is an environment of only evil. No father would try to reform a wayward boy by sending him to the vilest part of a city, where he would associate only with degenerates. Sensible people do not try to wash themselves by wallowing in filth. God does for every person in this world all that infinite love, wisdom and power can do for a free moral agent. If a man chooses sin rather than righteousness, infinite love,

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wisdom and power cannot keep hell out of him, or him out of hell. If he chooses death instead of life, he must submit to the process of moral putrefaction, and abide by the law of necessity that the dead and the living must, in the final adjustment of affairs, be kept apart.

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